



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2016

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*Carolina Center for Civic Education*

**"Investing in our future, creating tomorrow's leaders"**

### **25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON: AN ATTORNEY ADVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

*By Andy McVey*

*CCCE Volunteer Attorney Advisor*



As I write this piece, we are just a few hours away from electing the next President of the United States. I am reminded today of the important role that the North Carolina mock trial program has played for twenty-five years in introducing students to civics.

Few things in my professional life have brought me as much joy as my involvement with mock trial. In 1994, I was beginning my second year of practice in Asheboro when my senior partner and mentor, Steve Schmidly, encouraged me to undertake coaching the brand new high school mock trial team with him. Steve's daughter, Brooke, had enjoyed considerable success as a member of the Salem Academy team which represented North Carolina at the National High School Mock Trial Championship.

In our first year of competition, Asheboro won the regional before losing the final round of the state competition to an exceptional team from Brooke's alma mater. Over the next five years, Asheboro became very competitive, due largely to the support our team received from the community. Our championship wins and losses at the state and national competitions were reported above the fold on the front page of the local newspaper. We were entrusted with a key to the Randolph County Courthouse, which allowed the team a luxury of practicing essentially any time we wanted. We had "open" practices before competitions, drawing as many as 100 spectators from Asheboro. The period was surreal.



A program which had initially struggled to find seven students to compete in its first year grew to a size which had us begging to increase the then two-team maximum. Steve was an exceptional motivator who found a way to bring out the best in every student and, by 1997, he turned his focus to primarily teaching basic skills to our younger junior varsity team, leaving me to work with our older students. I threw him for a loop in late 1999, when I decided to make a professional move to Wilmington and took over mock trial coaching responsibilities at New Hanover High School. After my new team was

eliminated, I returned to Asheboro on the weekends to help Steve prepare the team for states and nationals. That story-book year ended with Asheboro finishing #2 in the national competition, with me having the privilege of waving the Asheboro flag at nationals as Steve witnessed Brooke's law school graduation the same weekend.

I continued to coach at New Hanover for a year or two before taking a seat on the NMSMTC Board of Directors. I slid into an administrative role in the state competition, as well, serving on the committee that recommended rules changes, then regional chair, then state chair. Along the way, I wrote the 2005 state case materials. Eventually, I returned to coaching and currently work with a group of homeschool students here in Wilmington.

Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Sue Johnson and others at the Center for Civic Education reserve big kudos from me for supporting changes which have allowed the program to become more inclusive. Twenty years ago, the notion of a homeschool program participating in mock trial was inconsistent with rules interpretations that prohibited "all star" teams who were not affiliated with a particular school. Today, my friend, Darren Allen (another Steve Schmidly protégé) and the Central Carolina Homeschool team he coaches are stellar examples of why a change in that interpretation was necessary.

Other rules changes we lobbied took hold in the early 2000's. The two-team maximum per school was lifted, allowing more and more students to participate. Similarly, a rule was enacted to require a team which won its region two years in a row to travel to another region the following year. I saw this as an opportunity to open the field to the inclusion of new teams at the state competition.

On this important day, I am grateful that our state has a program which energizes young people who are hungry to learn about our judicial process. To Gordon Widenhouse, the founder of the program, the North Carolina Advocates for Justice and the Center for Civic Education, I offer my sincere congratulations on achieving the 25-year milestone and my high hopes for the next 25!

*Editor's note: If you are not already involved in the NC mock trial program, please consider joining us as a team mentor or judge / juror at our regional competitions. **We are in need of a team advisor in Raleigh.** Contact CCCE Program Coordinator Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com) for more information. You'll be glad you did!*

### **CALENDAR 2016 – 2017 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

Final Registration Deadline and \$175 Team Fee Due  
Team Member List, Code of Ethics, Release Forms Due  
\*\*Last Day to Withdraw Without Penalty\*\*  
Regional Competition  
Widenhouse Award Nomination Materials Due

Friday, Dec. 9, 2016  
Friday, Jan. 6, 2017  
Friday, Jan. 6, 2017  
Saturday, Feb. 4, 2017  
Weds., Feb. 22, 2017

State Finals Competition  
National Championship, Hartford, CT

Fri. – Sat., March 10-11, 2017  
May 11-13, 2017

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**THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 COMPETITION SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!**

State Finals: Rudolf Widenhouse  
Asheville: Melrose Law, PLLC  
    *Supporter:* 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Bar Association  
Charlotte area: The Sumwalt Law Firm  
Fayetteville: Britton Law, P.A.  
Greenville: Hardee & Hardee, LLP  
High Point: Manger Law Firm  
Pittsboro: Glenn Mills Fisher & Mahoney, P.A.  
    *Supporter:* Durham County Bar Association  
Raleigh: Twiggs Strickland & Rabenau, and Maurer Law, Co-Sponsors  
Salisbury: Rowan County Bar Association  
Wilmington: Shipman & Wright

**CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW** - partnering with CCCE to host our State Finals!

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSOR!**

**Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Company of North Carolina**

***IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .***

***Special thanks to our 2016-17 Regional Coordinators and CCCE Board Members: Asheville Regional Coordinators Mark Melrose and Marion Parsons-Groat, Fayetteville Regional Coordinator Rebecca Britton, Gastonia Regional Coordinators Holden Clark and Daniel O'Shea, Greenville Regional Coordinators Jeffrey Cannon and Phil Entzminger, High Point Regional Coordinator Rich Manger, Pittsboro Regional Coordinators Liz Barber and Robert Jessup, Raleigh Regional Coordinators Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados, Salisbury Regional Coordinator Darrin Jordan, Wilmington Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr.; and CCCE Board Members Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Rich Manger, Bradley Bannon, Adrienne Blocker, Christine Scheef, Brooke Schmidly, Mark Sumwalt; Bill Powers (*ex officio*) and David Henson (*ex officio*).***

***Special thanks also to our 2016-17 Site Coordinators:***

***Asheville:* Brett Pinkston, *Charlotte area:* Beverly K. Moore, *Fayetteville:* Tanja Shurling and Karen Kueny, *Greenville:* Jessi Cannon and Kristin Byrum, *High Point:* Rose Pratt and Jane Goeke, *Pittsboro:* Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, *Raleigh:* Michelle Keely and Sandra Strickland, *Salisbury:* Emily Applewhite, and *Wilmington:* Brandy Jo Lea and Christi Wert.**

***\*\*If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the NCAJ High School Mock Trial program, please contact Sue Johnson, State Coordinator, at [sueheathjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:sueheathjohnson@gmail.com), or Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Mock Trial Committee Co-Chairs, at [rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com) or [mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com](mailto:mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com).***